

The Imagery of the Blind
in
Introduction to Psychology
YERKES

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Yerkes: Introduction to
Psychology

states, as somewhat isolated and peculiar. At your lecture the other night, though I am now over twenty-nine, the memory of my childish misery at the dread of being peculiar came over me so strongly that I felt I must thank you for proving that, in this particular at any rate, my case is most common." (Inquiries Into Human Faculty, p. 113.)

Herein we have another proof of need of openmindedness and willingness to give serious attention to experiences which are foreign to our mental life.

The use of imagery in exceptional cases.—Prodigies of various sorts are known to depend, in many instances, upon a remarkable power of visualization. This is true of a number of mathematical prodigies who are able to do mentally mathematical feats which are difficult and time-consuming for the ordinary person. To be able to see clearly before one the numerals 187,293,047,890 and 328,790,283,289 and the several lines of digits which would result in the case of long-process multiplication, and to read with the mind's eye the product is indeed a remarkable feat from the point of view of most of us. It is, however, possible to those individuals whose visual images are exceptionally clear and persistent.

The imagery of the blind, and of the blind and deaf.—Those unfortunate individuals who from birth lack the senses of sight and hearing often possess mental imagery which is extremely interesting. Miss Helen Keller, who although deprived of sight, hearing, and the power of articulate speech, is highly educated and closely in touch with the world of human events, writes most illuminatingly of her imagery and of her sense experiences. "It is not for me to say whether we see best with the hand or the eye. I only know that the world I see with my fingers is alive, ruddy, satisfying. Touch brings the blind many sweet certainties which our more fortunate fellows miss, because their sense

of touch is uncultivated. When they look at things they put their hands in their pockets. No doubt that is one reason why their knowledge is often so vague, inaccurate, and useless." . . . "I know by smell the kind of house we enter. I have recognized an old-fashioned country house because it has several layers of odors, left by a succession of families, of plants, perfumes, and draperies." . . . "From exhalations I learn much about people. I often know the work they are engaged in. The odors of wood, iron, paint, and drugs cling to the garments of those who work with them. Thus I can distinguish the carpenter from the iron-worker, the artist from the mason or the chemist. When a person passes quickly from one place to another I get a scent impression of where he has been—the kitchen, the garden, or the sick-room. I gain pleasurable ideas of freshness and good taste from the odors of soap, toilet waters, clean garments, woolen and silk stuffs, and gloves." (Keller, Helen: *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Century Magazine*, vol. 75, pp. 566-577.)

Touch, smell, taste, and the sensations of movement and of bodily condition count for everything in the perceptions and ideas of such individuals. What we see actually, or in our mind's eye, they perceive or image in terms of the other senses. Miss Keller's imagery is chiefly tactual-motor and olfactory, but it is almost impossible for us to imagine what it is like, so different is it from our own.

Imagining.—We are said to imagine not when we merely have images, but when our imagery is of such a nature that our experiences seem to us new and original. Imagery which is repetitional of previous experiences and which has the feel of familiarity we class with memory experiences; that which shares in an experience which seems unfamiliar, new, is classed with imagination.

Because of this important difference memory and imaginative experiences have been grouped together under the

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